

Networking for People Who Hate Networking



A FIELD GUIDE FOR INTROVERTS,
THE OVERWHELMED, AND
THE UNDERCONNECTED

Devora Zack

"I hate 'networking' and I loved this book!"
—David Bach, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author
of *The Automatic Millionaire*

An Excerpt From

***Networking for People Who Hate Networking:
A Field Guide for Introverts, the Overwhelmed, and the
Underconnected***

by Devora Zack

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INTRODUCTION

this book is required reading

Only connect.

—E. M. Forster, *Howards End*

Learning Latin in Greek

On my first day of grad school at Cornell University, I attended micro-economics. The professor, in an attempt to calm our first-year jitters, explained in soothing tones that he would be showing a lot of graphs, yet there was no need to panic. He said, “Just think of graphs as flow-charts, and you’ll be fine.” As an arts professional with no background whatsoever in economics, I suddenly felt dizzy as my vision blurred. I had never heard of a flowchart. I was doomed.

I later described the experience of those first few weeks in business

school as like trying to learn Latin in Greek . . . except I didn't know Greek either. No matter how earnestly I took notes, a few hours later I had no idea what they meant.

A comparable pitfall exists when a self-declared *non-networker* tries very hard to follow networking rules written for a different species altogether. There is no point of reference. No mental bucket exists in which to dump the data. The data is fine. It is just in a foreign language. *This* networking book, on the other hand, is written in language spoken and understood by introverts, the overwhelmed, and the underconnected. What luck! You finally have a chance at a passing grade.

By the way, I now return to Cornell annually—teaching MBA students networking skills. I have yet to be asked back to lecture on economics, however.

Networking for People Who Hate Networking.

Why would such a book exist? Isn't it a bit like giving quiche recipes to people allergic to eggs and cheese? Or surrounding oneself with fragrant flowers despite suffering from severe hay fever? If you have an aversion to something that is not absolutely necessary, why not find something else to occupy your life? Why torture yourself?

These are solid questions. Thanks for asking.

Allow me to begin by saying I agree with you 100 percent. Do not waste a single precious hour on an activity you hate! Still, you are not off the hook that easily. You do not get to place this book back on the shelf (or e-shelf, as the case may be), proclaiming yourself water to networking's vinegar.

Instead, I am going to perform the astounding trick of making networking an enjoyable, rewarding activity. All without mind-altering substances! So find a comfy chair or patch of grass, crease this spine, and commit. You won't regret it.

This field guide begins by politely examining—and then shattering to pieces—traditional networking truisms. Commandments along the lines of:

- Promote yourself constantly.
- More contacts = higher probability of success.
- Never eat alone.
- Create non-stop touch points.
- Get *out there* as much as possible.

Until today (reality is subjective), networking books have been written for people of a particular temperament—the very personality style that is already predisposed to enjoy the prospect of spearing cheese in a room full of bustling strangers.

We will discover early in the book that this personality type comprises a paltry 30 to 50 percent of the general population. I am certain this is an unintended oversight on the part of other, well-meaning authors. Nevertheless, smoke comes out of my ears just thinking about it. The other 50 to 70 percent of humankind are being ignored. Misled. Bamboozled. It is time for the rest of us to take back our rightful share of the networking world.

And along the way we will discover the enormous value of understanding and leveraging our natural style when networking. No more stamping out our instincts.

Why Bother?

What's that you're mumbling? You don't like networking and have no interest, anyway? It drains you? It never works? You don't have time? You don't need to? It's phony, self-serving, fake, inauthentic, superficial, conniving, manipulative, and useless?

Hold it right there. Take a sip of water. Pull yourself together.

Introverts, the overwhelmed, and the underconnected fail at traditional networking by following advice never intended for us in the first place.

In my experience, people who proclaim to hate networking also believe they are not good at it. In fact, the reverse is true. You have the raw materials to be a stellar networker. You are simply following the wrong rules. Standard networking advice fails you, so you assume you fail at networking. Plus you *hate* it.

Now, at long last, you can learn a method of networking in keeping with the true you. Not a moment too soon.

What Is at Stake?

Only whatever you most want to accomplish in your life. No biggie.

Networking allows you to achieve your potential. Think of a Big Goal. Perhaps you want to find a new job, achieve a promotion, make a new professional or personal contact, improve the world, expand your influence, sell a product or service, write a book, seal a deal, improve collaboration, build a reputation, achieve your dream, or grow a business?

Networking will further your aim. In fifteen years as an executive coach, I have never met a person who did not benefit tremendously from learning how to network—on his or her own terms.

What is networking, really? Networking is the art of building and maintaining connections for shared positive outcomes.

Real networking is connecting.

The more authentic you are, the more resilient and valuable networks you create. You can learn networking techniques that rely on being true to yourself, using strengths you already have. You can learn to work with, rather than fight against, your lovable introverted,

overwhelmed, and/or underconnected self. Previously labeled liabilities are now your finest strengths.

Enticed?

Return on Investment (ROI)

Time is your most valuable asset (unless, perhaps, you are fabulously wealthy). What about this field guide merits devoting a couple hours of your precious time to it rather than *all* the other competing options out there?

- a. You will learn a new, super-effective method of networking described in accessible, easy-to-understand language.
- b. You will gain dozens of practical tips while learning clear, relevant action steps with *direct* application to your own networking goals.
- c. You will benefit from reading and investigating a myriad of memorable, real-life examples from my many years in many fields.

Grab a pen or pencil; you'll need it. There is no such thing as a free ride. Glad to have you along.



CHAPTER ONE

welcome to your field guide

Trust yourself. Then you will know how to live.

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

People swear up and down that I'm an extrovert.

This drives me nuts! I deny these accusations adamantly and then am subjected to a laundry list of supposed examples as to why I am mistaken. "But you give seminars for a living! You give presentations to huge groups and seem to love it! Plus, you know how to work a room . . ."

Blah, blah, blah.

These people have no idea what it really means to be an introvert. Plus, they assume that being an introvert *by definition* implies that one cannot be a strong speaker or networker.

Together, we will dispute, disprove, and knock upside the head these assumptions.

**Welcome to your indispensable networking field guide for introverts,
the overwhelmed, and the underconnected.**

Your Author and Tour Guide

As we embark through the uncharted terrain of networking for people who hate networking, you want to be certain you are in capable hands. Why am I qualified to lead you on this journey?

First of all, despite protests from well-intentioned, ill-advised naysayers, I am an off-the-chart introvert. I am also nearly always overwhelmed and decidedly underconnected. My idea of a good time is being all alone. I have conversations with people in my head that I think actually took place. I need time to process ideas thoroughly before responding—or I get myself into trouble. The idea of a free-floating happy hour propels me into free-floating anxiety. A cacophony of external stimuli doesn't excite me; it drives me away. I easily and naturally pick up on nonverbal cues many others miss. I prefer a few deep relationships to a large group of friends.

None of these preferences is linked to my exceptionally high energy level, propensity for public speaking, or business success. That's because these attributes are not related to what defines introversion, a topic I have researched and taught about extensively for over fifteen years.

I am Type A, and I move fast. These traits are also not related to introversion.

Let's have some fun. I will present examples of attributes that, to the untrained eye, may seem extrovert-centric, but with a bit of analysis emerge as introvert-friendly.

My favorite sport is running.

Even some “experts” claim that introverts are for some reason slower and less active than extroverts. This is baloney. Think about running—a fundamentally solitary sport that requires a singular focus for extended periods. The runner can think without interruption for the whole length of the run. What a perfect fit for an introvert!

I give two to three presentations weekly.

Whoa! This statistic combats most introvert stereotypes head on. Although I am a private person, I make a point of telling clients I am an introvert (on behalf of introverts everywhere). Introverts are entirely capable of being skilled public speakers. In fact, introverts prefer clearly defined roles and so may be more comfortable leading a discussion than participating in one. Many introverts are more at ease in front of a group than roaming aimlessly through a cocktail party.

I love networking.

Herein lies the book's focus. This was not always the case for me. I discovered some wonderful techniques that turned the world of networking upside down—or shall I say right side up? You, too, can gain insights that allow you to excel at and enjoy networking. You can be a networking superstar.

Seem impossible? I am here to tell you it is not.

A Brief History of the Introvert

Many readers of this book are introverts. Many have been taught through cultural cues that introversion is a problem, a deficit, something unfortunate to hide or overcome.

From a young age, introverts receive the message that it is an extrovert's world. *Go play with others. Join in on the game. Class participation is part of your grade.* Kids who withdraw around crowds are labeled as anti-social rather than applauded for being self-regulating.

Introversion is innate, and preferences are observable early on. As a kid, I asked for games to play by myself—a request that could prompt some parents to conduct a thorough psychological examination. As a parent now myself, I recognized clear traits indicating an introverted preference in one of my sons from the age of three.

THE BIG THREE

Introverts are *reflective*, *focused*, and *self-reliant*. These characteristics lead to the following key distinctions between introverts and extroverts:

Introverts think to talk.	Extroverts talk to think.
Reflective	Verbal
Introverts go deep.	Extroverts go wide.
Focused	Expansive
Introverts energize alone.	Extroverts energize with others.
Self-reliant	Social

Why not indulge yourself and use all three characteristics at once? Take some time to ponder these traits (*reflective*), in depth (*focus*), while alone (*self-reliant*). I'll wait here.

Regardless of temperament, by linking your strengths to customized techniques, you will be well-positioned to network away. Introverts, extroverts, and *centroverts* (definition ahead!) can all benefit from this field guide.

Did I mention that I am psychic? I sense you are curious where you land in all this. Right this way . . .



CHAPTER TWO

assess yourself

We do not see the world as it is. We see the world as we are.

—Anais Nin

Reverse-It Quiz

1. Why do extroverts have voicemail?
2. Why do introverts have voicemail?

Answer:

1. To never miss a call.
2. To never answer the phone.

Identical actions can spring from divergent motivations. This point reminds us there is more to behavior than meets the eye.

I am often told the observation of action is *proof* of another's motivation. This is never true. Inferences reveal only the observer's bias. The reasons *behind* behaviors reveal intentions.



Notes From the Field

Breakfast Selections

While facilitating a residential seminar for senior executives, I explained that introverts generally prefer having breakfast reading a newspaper to socializing with classmates. Robert, an extrovert, challenged, "Then why did David [an introvert] come sit with me this morning at breakfast?"

I asked David to explain. He smiled and said, "I thought I should . . . Although I didn't really want to sit with anyone—no offense, Robert!—I told myself *I am here to network, so I better force myself to sit with you.*" The class burst into laughter at his honest reply.

"So," I continued, "why might an extrovert sit down next to a classmate he just met the day before?" Every extrovert's hand shot up, but that didn't matter, because two or three of them had begun answering without waiting for the formality of being called on, "We like talking to people. Who wants to eat alone?"

MENTAL ELASTICITY

Physical flexibility requires pliable muscles. Maintaining and building dexterity necessitates an ongoing commitment.

Mental flexibility means having customized responses to people and events and also requires continual development. Mental agility requires the ability to adapt without much lead time.

Conveniently, our pals the neuroscientists (always there when needed) have a name for this phenomenon: *elasticity*. Mental elasticity can be learned and developed. This term describes the ability to be flexible in our approach to situations. Thinking in new ways builds elasticity.

From creative problem solving to crossword puzzles, anything that stretches the mind contributes to the development of a healthy, flexible mindset. Elasticity keeps brains young and prepared to meet challenges with fast, innovative responses.

Understanding dimensions of yourself through assessments also increases the brain's elasticity. And gaining clarity about your preferences allows you to better develop all aspects of yourself. Self-knowledge naturally flows into a better understanding and acceptance of differences in others. Perceiving differences is at least as important as identifying similarities.

Do not compare your insides with other people's outsides.

Negative judgment often stems from an error in comparison—using one's own internal state to critique another person's behavior. My need to work uninterrupted may clash with your need to break up tasks with frequent, spontaneous conversations. Understanding different styles takes a relationship further than making critical, erroneous assumptions.

TEMPERAMENT ASSESSMENT

Each number presents two statements. Assign 3 points between each pair, based on your point of view. Point distributions are 3 and 0 or 2 and 1, no half-points. If you relate to A and not to B, A = 3 and B = 0. If you agree a bit with A but more with B, A = 1 and B = 2. Respond based on your nature, not what you think is “right.”

1.	A	Brainstorming is best when ideas are spontaneously shared.
	B	Brainstorming is best when topics are distributed in advance.
2.	A	An ideal day off includes time on my own.
	B	An ideal day off is spent with others.
3.	A	People may consider me to be a private person.
	B	People may think I talk too much.
4.	A	When networking, I am good at circulating the room.
	B	When networking, I usually focus on one or two people.
5.	A	I prefer working independently.
	B	I prefer working as part of a team.
6.	A	Ideas come to me by thinking things over.
	B	Ideas come to me by talking things through.
7.	A	I prefer being with a group of people at lunch.
	B	I prefer one-on-one or alone time at lunch.
8.	A	I am uncomfortable making small talk.
	B	I am a natural conversationalist.
9.	A	I make friends wherever I go.
	B	I have a few true friends.
10.	A	I often feel misunderstood.
	B	I am easily understood.
11.	A	I have numerous, diverse interests.
	B	I have a few interests I pursue in depth.
12.	A	Colleagues get to know me easily.
	B	Most colleagues do not know me well

Now enter your points and total the columns.

Assessment Scorecard

1.	A =	B =
2.	B =	A =
3.	B =	A =
4.	A =	B =
5.	B =	A =
6.	B =	A =
7.	A =	B =
8.	B =	A =
9.	A =	B =
10.	B =	A =
11.	A =	B =
12.	A =	B =
Totals	Extrovert =	Introvert =

31–36: Strong preference for your dominant style

25–30: Preference for your dominant style

19–24: Slight preference for your dominant style

So, how did you do?

There are no better or worse results. It is not possible to fail this assessment!



Strength of Preference

Let's begin with a quick lesson in personality assessments.

Anyone with half a brain realizes there are more than two types of people. To contrast introversion and extroversion (I/E) does not imply that all extroverts—or all introverts—are just like everyone else in their category. Although I/E is a significant component of interpersonal style, many additional factors contribute to one's overall personality. Furthermore, *strength of preference*, as identified on this assessment, impacts how strongly a person identifies with defining traits for each type.

People who score 25 or higher on extroversion are said to have *typed out*, to use my nerdy personality assessment lingo, as *strong* or *clear extroverts*. These people exhibit—or at least identify with—many extrovert characteristics.

The same can be said of introverts with an assessment rating of 25 to 36.

A person with a total higher score of 19 to 24 (for either column) is in the category that I dub *centroverts*. Particularly in the 19 to 20 range, this person could take the assessment again tomorrow and flip sides. A score of 18 for each, exactly in the middle, indicates neither an introvert or extrovert preference—also qualifying one for *centrovert* status. This happens all the time and is not cause for undue anxiety. Everyone has bits and pieces of both traits—it is just a matter of strength of preference.

ASSESSMENT RESPONSES

Individual reactions to the questionnaire results follow three standard patterns:

1. This is me!
2. I'm in the middle . . . is that OK?
3. I knew this wouldn't work.

Let's examine these responses in more detail.

1. "This is me!" is a typical reaction when assessment results confirm one's own expectations and self-perception. Those with a strong preference along the I/E continuum often fall into this category. The more a person identifies with one end of the spectrum, the more she relates to the descriptions of that social style.
2. "I'm in the middle . . . is that OK?" people exhibit minor preferences and land in the center of the I/E scale. These respondents tend to be concerned by the results—"Does this mean I am wishy-washy or somehow weak?" To the contrary. Those who score mid-range have the easiest time relating to people all along the I/E spectrum. Anyone can train himself to learn to relate to different styles; it just comes most naturally for centroverts, in the middle of the continuum. Other factors—such as a high self-awareness, familiarity with self-assessments, and a strong background in communications—also contribute to the ease with which one relates to different temperaments.
3. "I knew this wouldn't work." At times, assessment results contradict a respondent's self-image, causing one to question the assessment's validity. A respondent might say, "I think I'm an

extrovert, but my results say I'm a strong introvert!" If you find yourself in this position, reflect on your mind-set while taking the assessment. Were your responses based on your inner nature or on how you tend to behave in certain challenging situations? Have you taught yourself to be flexible in situations that demand stretching yourself?

When in doubt, retake the assessment while thinking about your *preference*, not your learned ability. Keep in mind your natural, internal reactions, not what you perceive to be an ideal. Confusion may also arise from misperceptions you apply to the terms introversion and extroversion.

CAUTION: EXTREME READING CONDITIONS

A strong introvert exhibits more telling introverted traits than a slight introvert, and the same can be said of extroverts.

This book frequently focuses on those introverts and extroverts with the clearest preference, because distinctions are most easily understood when examining the strongest examples. There is some discussion of centroverts, who identify with certain traits on both sides of the spectrum. This field guide will also prove quite useful and relevant to centroverts.

Keep in mind your assessment results when reading. A higher number accompanying your I/E preference means more examples will ring true for you. Readers with slight preferences will relate with varying degrees to the examples provided.

The terms *strong* and *slight* reference the degree of identification with one's primary style. This has no relationship to whether or not someone has a strong personality, firm convictions, or can bench-press two hundred pounds.

INTERCONNECTIVITY

Quantum physicists have discovered a very cool phenomenon with direct relevance to networking. Amazing. The experiment has been tested numerous times, providing validity to the fascinating findings.

Here's the scoop. Two subatomic particles are physically connected, then separated. From that point forward whenever one is impacted, the other instantaneously reacts even if hundreds of miles away. This effect is called interconnectivity. Once a connection is established, the particles retain a relationship without a physical link.

Because people are made out of atomic particles, this experiment has logical ramifications for human relationships. We can relate these scientific findings to connectivity in business and networking.

Building points of connectivity with others is a critical component of successful networking. Discovering links of commonality with others sharpens our receptivity to maintaining connections. Introverts' ability to focus and ask well-formed questions means an innate ability to forge real connections. Conversations go deeper, catapulting relationships into a new dimension.

Cultivating a couple of connections has more tangible results than dumping a slew of cards into the ol' briefcase. Introverts connect. Not with everyone or all the time, yet our natural gravitational pull is toward lasting relationships with others.

With the right attitude, a focus on your strengths, and a few tablespoons of willpower, you can become an expert networker—applying the personality you already have. Very handy.

I would be negligent if I didn't mention that connecting takes a bit more effort than holding up the wall while pretending to check your messages.

Higher risk, higher return.

Meet me at the next chapter, where we will gleefully smash to smithereens some standard, shallow stereotypes.

this material has been excerpted from

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